

Expert Report

Evan F. Kohlmann

June 2015

My full name is Evan Francois Kohlmann. I am a private International Terrorism Consultant who specializes in tracking Al-Qaida and other contemporary terrorist movements. I hold a degree in International Politics from the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service (Georgetown University), and a Juris Doctor (professional law degree) from the University of Pennsylvania Law School. I am also the recipient of a certificate in Islamic studies from the Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding (CMCU) at Georgetown University. I currently work as a senior partner at Flashpoint Global Partners, a New York-based security consulting firm. I additionally serve as an on-air analyst for NBC News in the United States. I am author of the book Al-Qaida's Jihad in Europe: the Afghan-Bosnian Network (Berg/Oxford International Press, London, 2004) which has been used as a teaching text in graduate-level terrorism courses offered at such educational institutions as Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, Princeton University, and the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS).

As part of my research beginning in approximately 1997, I have traveled overseas to interview known terrorist recruiters and organizers (such as Abu Hamza al-Masri) and to attend underground conferences and rallies; I have reviewed thousands of open source documents; and, I have amassed one of the largest digital collections of terrorist multimedia and propaganda in the world. The open source documents in my collection include sworn legal affidavits, original court exhibits, video and audio recordings, text communiqués, eyewitness testimonies, and archived Internet websites. I have testified on eleven occasions as an expert witness in jurisdictions beyond the United States—including the United Kingdom, Denmark, Australia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. I have testified twice as an expert witness in U.S. civil cases, Gates v. Syrian Arab Republic and Amduso v. Sudan before the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. I have additionally testified as an approved expert witness in United States federal and military courts in twenty-seven criminal cases; including:

- United States v. Sabri Benkhala (Eastern District of Virginia, 2004)
- United States v. Ali Timimi (Eastern District of Virginia, 2005)
- United States v. Uzair Paracha (Southern District of New York, 2005)
- United States v. Ali Asad Chandia (Eastern District of Virginia, 2006)
- United States v. Yassin Aref (Northern District of New York, 2006).
- United States v. Sabri Benkhala (Eastern District of Virginia, 2007)
- United States v. Rafiq Sabir (Southern District of New York, 2007)
- United States v. Emaddedine Muntasser (District of Massachusetts, 2007)
- United States v. Hassan Abu Jihaad (District of Connecticut, 2008)
- United States v. Mohammed Amawi et al. (Northern District of Ohio, 2008)
- United States v. Salim Hamdan (Guantanamo Bay Military Commissions, 2008)

- United States v. Ali Hamza al-Bahlul (Guantanamo Bay Military Commissions, 2008)
- United States v. Mohamed Shnewer et al. (District of New Jersey, 2008)
- United States v. Oussama Kassir (Southern District of New York, 2009)
- United States v. Syed Haris Ahmed (Northern District of Georgia, 2009)
- United States v. Ehsanul Sadequee (Northern District of Georgia, 2009)
- United States v. Pete Seda et al. (District of Oregon, 2010)
- United States v. Betim Kaziu (Eastern District of New York, 2011)
- United States v. Daniel Boyd et al. (Eastern District of North Carolina, 2011)
- United States v. Barry Walter Bujol Jr. (Southern District of Texas, 2011)
- United States v. Tarek Mehanna et al. (District of Massachusetts, 2011)
- United States v. Patrick Nayyar (Southern District of New York, 2012)
- United States v. Adis Medunjanin (Eastern District of New York, 2012)
- United States v. Anes Subasic (Eastern District of North Carolina, 2012)
- United States v. Mohammed Nisar Khan (Western District of Texas, 2012)
- United States v. Mohamed Mohamud (District of Oregon, 2013)
- United States v. Abdel Hameed Shehadeh (Eastern District of New York, 2013)

In United States v. Uzair Paracha, Federal District Judge Sidney Stein held a Daubert hearing on my qualifications as an expert witness and issued a ruling concluding: “Evan Kohlmann has sufficient education, training, and knowledge to be qualified as an expert, and... Kohlmann’s methodology—that is, his process of gathering sources, including a variety of original and secondary sources, cross-checking sources against each other, and subjecting his opinions and conclusions to peer review—is sufficiently reliable to meet the standards for admissibility of expert testimony set by the Federal Rules of Evidence.”

Likewise, in United States v. Hassan Abu Jihad, Federal District Judge Mark Kravitz held a Daubert hearing on my qualifications as an expert witness and issued a ruling concluding, “Mr. Kohlmann is certainly qualified to provide expert testimony... Mr. Kohlmann is qualified by means of his education, training, background, and experience to testify as an expert on terrorism... Mr. Kohlmann has conducted first-hand interviews of several leaders of terrorist organizations and has reviewed reams of information about al Qaeda... and the other subjects on which he will offer testimony. Indeed... it is apparent that these subjects are Mr. Kohlmann’s life work, and he has, therefore, acquired a considerable amount of information and documentation on these subjects... Mr. Kohlmann’s work receives a considerable amount of peer review from academic scholars and others, and by all accounts, Mr. Kohlmann’s work is well regarded.”

Similarly, during United States v. Syed Haris Ahmed, Federal District Judge William S. Duffey Jr. held a Daubert hearing on my qualifications as an expert witness, and noted in his published ruling, “Kohlmann has developed an understanding of terrorist organization structures, operations, and membership, allowing him to speak with authority about Al-Qaeda in Iraq, Lashkar-e-Taiba, and Jaish-e-Mohammed. His research and experience have provided him a base of understanding far greater, and far more sophisticated, than of the Court or of jurors... A person lacking Kohlmann’s

advanced knowledge of JeM and LeT essentially would not be able to recognize the information on Khan’s hard drive as information that might link a person to JeM or LeT.”

Most recently, on February 4, 2011, the U.S. 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals issued a formal ruling regarding the admissibility of my testimony during United States v. Rafiq Sabir (2007): “Kohlmann has, in fact, been qualified as an expert on al Qaeda and terrorism in a number of federal prosecutions... Kohlmann’s proposed expert testimony had a considerable factual basis... We conclude that the district court acted well within its discretion in concluding that Kohlmann’s testimony satisfied the enumerated requirements of Rule 702... Such testimony was plainly relevant to mens rea.”

In April 2015, I was requested by the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of New York (EDNY) to produce an expert report on the Central Asian jihadi movement known as “Taifatul Mansura” and how it cooperates with other jihadist factions active in Pakistan’s remote Waziristan region. “Taifatul Mansura” is generally considered as a spinoff from the larger Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which despite its name is comprised of militants from across Central Asia—from Turkey to China. The IMU emerged during the 1990s and became a significant military force during the civil war in Tajikistan. According to the IMU, during fighting in Tajikistan in 1994, IMU founding commander Mohammed Tohir Faruq (a.k.a. Tohir Yuldashev) formed a relationship with Saudi mujahideen commander Ibn-ul-Khattab (a.k.a. Samir al-Suwailem)—an Arab-Afghan veteran, a friend of Usama Bin Laden, and a later co-founder of the Islamic Army of the Caucasus in Chechnya.¹ Tohir Yuldashev reportedly later traveled to Chechnya himself in order to confer with local mujahideen commanders in the Caucasus and promote his image as a pan-Islamic leader.

The relationship between the Taliban itself and Uzbek, Chechen, Azeri, and Uighur mujahideen is a symbiotic one that began almost immediately as a result of mutual interests and mutual adversaries. By the late 1990s—as the Taliban were consolidating their power and influence in Afghanistan—both the Islamic Army of the Caucasus and the IMU had gained wide notoriety for launching a range of high-profile operations targeting either Russian or allied military forces in Chechnya, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and even inside Russian territory itself. To varying degrees, the subsequent crackdown by the Russian government and their allies in Central Asia on jihadist activity forced groups based in the Caucasus, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and elsewhere to relocate their leadership to more secure territory. Even the formerly sympathetic Islamist regime in Tajikistan turned its back on the IMU after coming under significant pressure from the Russians. Consequently, “Amir al-Mumineen” Mullah Mohammed Omar and the Taliban in Afghanistan agreed to host relocated training camps and bases for these groups—and in the case of the Chechens, even an official embassy in Kabul.

The IMU’s media wing later described their diplomatic negotiations with the Taliban:

“In [the] spring of 2001, Ameer of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan Muhammad Tohir Farooq explained the state of our Mujahideen in Tajikistan to Mullah Omar. Then Ameerul Mumineen told [us] to make hijrah to Afghanistan and continue our jihadi and religious activities there. Our mujahideen were received greatly by [the] leaders of

¹ Jundullah Studios. “Boden der ehre.” August 11, 2010.
<http://www.furqon.com/Video/real/bodenderehre1.rmvb>

Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Ameerul Mumineen called Juma Namangani to Qunduz and made him commander to Arab-Ajam who came from abroad and made 16 divisions.”²

For its part, the IMU would later proudly publish video of its then leader, Tohir Yuldashev, grinning widely upon meeting the then-deputy commander of Al-Qaida, Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, in Kabul under Taliban auspices.³ Likewise, despite the 9/11 attacks and explicit threats of military retaliation by the U.S., the Central Asian mujahideen who had found sanctuary in Afghanistan largely stood by the Taliban and Al-Qaida. IMU propaganda videos later insisted that “the Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan was the result of long lasting efforts from the truthful Mujahideen from around the world.”⁴

The U.S.-led retaliatory military campaign targeting Al-Qaida and Taliban forces in Afghanistan during the fall of 2001 was nearly a catastrophic event for the IMU and its conglomeration of fighters. The IMU’s famed military commander, former Soviet paratrooper Juma Namangani, was “martyred” during U.S. airstrikes on Taliban forces in northern Afghanistan in November 2001.⁵ Tohir Yuldashev was rumored to have narrowly escaped being captured or killed during the bloody Janji Castle battle near Mazar-e-Sharif. Given U.S. air superiority over Afghan territory, it was no longer practical—or even feasible—for the Taliban, Al-Qaida, or their Central Asian allies to maintain active bases or training camps there. As a result, “most of the Mujahideen moved to the familiar border area of Pakistan.”⁶ In a later IMU propaganda video retelling the history of the group, senior IMU media official “Shaykh Abu Ahmad al-Madani” explained:

“The tribal areas in Pakistan were a suitable place for the safety of the mujahideen. So they moved there because the Pakistan Army wasn’t able to control these places. And another aspect was that it was a familiar place, which the Mujahideen in the war against Russia even used as a base... This time again it was the tribal areas which were tactically chosen to fight against the enemy who came into Afghanistan.”⁷

Around this same time, an organization began to slowly take shape that would organize Pakistani tribal militants from across North and South Waziristan, Orakzai, Swat, and beyond into a single effective force: Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), or the Pakistani Taliban. The founder and first leader of the TTP was Baitullah Mehsud—an ethnic Pashtun in his early thirties from the Mehsud tribe, which is primarily based in South Waziristan. According to the former chief of Al-Qaida’s operations in

² Muvahhid, Abdus Samad. “In Memory of One of the Stars of Jihad in Central Asia: Abu Abdullah Pakistani.” Jundullah Studios. December 9, 2011.

³ Jundullah Studios. “Sieg oder Shahada.” April 10, 2009. <http://www.al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=55577>.

⁴ Jundullah Studios. “Frohe Bohtshaft aus Pakistan.” January 16, 2011. <http://www.shamikh1.net/vb/showthread.php?t=408>.

⁵ Muvahhid, Abdus Samad. “In Memory of One of the Stars of Jihad in Central Asia: Abu Abdullah Pakistani.” Jundullah Studios. December 9, 2011.

⁶ Jundullah Studios. “Frohe Bohtshaft aus Pakistan.” January 16, 2011. <http://www.shamikh1.net/vb/showthread.php?t=408>.

⁷ Jundullah Studios. “Frohe Bohtshaft aus Pakistan.” January 16, 2011. <http://www.shamikh1.net/vb/showthread.php?t=408>.

Afghanistan, Shaykh Mustafa Abu al-Yazid (a.k.a. “Shaykh Saeed”), “during the formation of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan’s establishment, it needed courageous men for its firmness and strength and to fight against its irresolute enemies in Northern Afghanistan and as a result, on a very early age, [Baitullah] joined those Mujahideen-e-Taliban who fought under the leadership of Emir-al-Mu’mineen Mullah Muhammad Omar.”⁸ Mehsud eventually resumed his “Islamic studies” at a hardline madrassah in Pakistan, “but when the Crusade campaign began, he left his studies to catch up with the Jihadi efforts.”⁹ In his later public eulogy, Al-Qaida’s Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri recounted how Baitullah “began to organize his brothers as soon as the Crusaders entered Afghanistan and compiled the little they knew to strengthen and organize that movement... He declared from the start that he was a soldier under the control of the Islamic state and the Mujahid Amir Al-Mullah Omar. Baitullah was able to put together a large Jihadi movement that included wars, raids, and ambushes against the Crusaders and their agents in Afghanistan.”¹⁰ The IMU’s Tohir Yuldashev similarly praised Baitullah as “a lion of the lions of our Ummah” and condemned his subsequent death in a U.S. drone strike as an “underhanded assassination.”¹¹

The IMU has gone to great lengths to publicize and profit from its ongoing relationship with the Pakistani Taliban. IMU representatives have boasted that upon their fighters “reaching the tribal areas of Pakistan, their brothers in the faith accepted them in the proper Islamic way”: as “noble guests.”¹² The IMU’s “Jundullah” media wing has released multiple videos showing the top leadership of its organization—including both Tohir Yuldashev and his successor “Abu Usman Adil”—meeting, conferring, and even walking together hand-in-hand with the deceased leader of the TTP, Hakimullah Mehsud.¹³ “Jundullah Media” has also distributed video footage of Hakimullah’s deputy Wali-ur-Rehman Mehsud speaking to a group of fighters (including Central Asian militants loyal to the IMU) prior to a military operation. The video glowingly describes Wali-ur-Rehman as “one of the big leaders of the Taliban of Pakistan.”¹⁴ According to the IMU, “the Muhajireen and the Ansar are two inseparable allies... For more than 7 years, the Muhajireen and the Ansar have fought side by side against the apostate government of Pakistan.”¹⁵ At a practical level, “operations are done together with

⁸ As-Sahab Media Foundation. “Shaykh Mustafa Abu al-Yazid: Condolences and Congratulations to the Muslim Ummah on the Martyrdom of Emir Martyr Baitullah Mehsud.” September 30, 2009. <http://www.al-faloja1.com/vb/showthread.php?t=86003>.

⁹ As-Sahab Media Foundation. “Shaykh Ayman al-Zawahiri: Eulogy for Emir Baitullah Mehsud.” September 27, 2009. <http://www.al-faloja1.com/vb/showthread.php?t=85482>.

¹⁰ As-Sahab Media Foundation. “Shaykh Ayman al-Zawahiri: Eulogy for Emir Baitullah Mehsud.” September 27, 2009. <http://www.al-faloja1.com/vb/showthread.php?t=85482>.

¹¹ Jundullah Studios. “The Ansar and the Muhajireen.” December 7, 2009. <http://www.furqon.com/Video/ansorlar-english.rmvb>.

¹² Jundullah Studios. “Frohe Bohtshaft aus Pakistan.” January 16, 2011. <http://www.shamikh1.net/vb/showthread.php?t=408>.

¹³ Jundullah Studios. “The Ansar and the Muhajireen.” December 7, 2009. <http://www.furqon.com/Video/ansorlar-english.rmvb>.

¹⁴ Jundullah Studios. “Frohe Bohtshaft aus Pakistan.” January 16, 2011. <http://www.shamikh1.net/vb/showthread.php?t=408>.

¹⁵ Jundullah Studios. “Frohe Bohtshaft aus Pakistan.” January 16, 2011. <http://www.shamikh1.net/vb/showthread.php?t=408>.

Muhajir and Ansar brothers, and sometimes separate. Ansar brothers have a tactic of helping out, and in that situation there are sure to be a lot of mujahideen.”¹⁶

IMU media publications documenting the group’s activities in Pakistan’s regional regions also offer a sense of how it has become an overarching umbrella for a wide panorama of Central Asian jihadi extremists who had been declared persona-non-grata in their countries of origin. A two-part video series produced by the IMU’s media wing in 2009 and 2010 profiled recently “martyred” fighters from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Morocco, Tunisia, Germany, and China.¹⁷ During one operation in the highlands of the Badr Mountains, a Turkmen national “Mujahid Zaynuddeen” is shown speaking to the camera: “Brothers, here we are in Waziristan, in cities and in mountains around this snow, praise be to God. Our goal is to make the religion of Allah supreme, and we are sacrificing our wealth, property, and lives on this path.”¹⁸ The late Tohir Yuldashev boasted, “I have 500 martyrs who gave oaths of allegiance to me, who were martyred in Chechnya, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan from different nationalities.”¹⁹

In 2004, an IMU spinoff faction (based in North Waziristan) known as the “Islamic Jihad Union” (IJU) first emerged from the shadows, claiming responsibility for a series of “martyrdom” operations targeting foreign embassies and government buildings inside Uzbekistan.²⁰ According to the former leader of the IJU, “Abu Yahya Mohammed Fatih”:

“After the fall of the Afghanistan Islamic [Emirate], we who shared the same opinions came together and decided to organize groups which will conduct jihad operations against the infidel constitution of cruel Karimov in Uzbekistan. The sole aim of all the emigrant-mujahedeen brothers was to find war-like solutions against the infidel constitution of cruel Karimov. For this aim our Union was established in 2002... Muslim youths in the republics of the former Soviet Union who found the path of Allah and are ready to fight for their religion have been trained in various fields in the training facilities of the IJU, and we praise God for this. One of the armed wings of the IJU is fighting in Afghanistan. Besides, we have also been in contact and also been working on our common targets together with Caucasian mujahideen.”²¹

The IJU speaks equally often of its mission to establish an Islamic state in Uzbekistan as of its ongoing efforts to launch operations targeting the U.S. and its allies

¹⁶ Jundullah Studios. “What’s Happening in the Tribal Areas, Part 4.” October 2, 2010. <http://www.ansar1.info/showthread.php?t=40934>.

¹⁷ Jundullah Studios. “Soldaten Allahs Part 1.” December 7, 2009. <http://www.furqon.com/Video/real/soldatenAllahsTeil1.rmvb>. See also: Jundullah Studios. “Soldaten Allahs Part 2.” January 12, 2010. <http://www.furqon.com/Video/real/soldatenAllahsTeil2.rmvb>. See also: Jundullah Studios. “Frohe Bohtshaft aus Pakistan.” January 16, 2011. <http://www.shamikh1.net/vb/showthread.php?t=408>.

¹⁸ Jundullah Studios. “What’s Happening in the Tribal Areas, Part 3.” May 29, 2010. <http://www.furqon.com/Video/real/qaboida-3.rmvb>.

¹⁹ Jundullah Studios. “What’s Happening in the Tribal Areas, Part 1.” March 9, 2010. <http://www.furqon.com/Video/real/qaboida-1.rmvb>.

²⁰ Islamic Jihad Union (IJU). “An Urgent Statement from Uzbekistan.” July 30, 2004. <http://www.openforum.ws/vb/showthread.php?t=12181>.

²¹ Islamic Jihad Union (IJU). “A Chat With The Commander of Islamic Jihad Union Ebu Yahya Muhammed Fatih.” May 31, 2007. http://www.sehadetvakti.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1203.

in concert with Al-Qaida and the TTP. In September 2007, German authorities arrested three local residents in the city of Frankfurt and accused them of plotting terrorist attacks on behalf of the IJU targeting the Frankfurt International Airport and the nearby U.S.-run Ramstein Air Base. Days later, on the sixth anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States, the IJU issued an official statement claiming responsibility for the failed plot, which it labeled a response to “injustice and brutal policies toward Muslims and Islam.” The communiqué also suggested that other similar terrorist attacks were being prepared for targets outside of Germany: “What the three brothers intended to do is also being planned in other places in the world.”²² On May 25, 2005, the U.S. State Department announced the designation of the IJU as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT). According an official statement from the State Department, “The Islamic Jihad [Union] continues to target Americans and U.S. facilities overseas and is a dangerous threat to U.S. interests.”²³

By 2009—as increasing numbers of Central Asian fighters gathered in northwest Pakistan—some of those who had fought under the IMU and IJU umbrella began seeking to establish their own independent public identities. These smaller factions—numbering a dozen or more—generally continued to fight alongside the IMU/IJU on the battlefield, but now hosted their own independent training camps and leadership hierarchies. According to the IMU’s Tohir Yuldashev, “There are lots of movements with different names, such as Fedayeen movements or Jihadi movements. But we ask our brothers and sisters and invite them all, so that the result of the whole struggle is an Islamic Caliphate.”²⁴ In many cases, these factions were associated with particular ethnic and/or linguistic minorities—such as Uyghurs (the Turkestan Islamic Party), Bulgar Muslims from Russia’s Volga region (Jamaat Bulgar), and even German nationals (the German Taliban Mujahideen).

The Turkic recruits headed to the IMU and its affiliates in the Pakistani tribal areas followed a reasonably consistent travel pattern to reach their intended destination. Prospective recruits were typically advised to gather in Turkey and then move on to Pakistan by traveling overland through Iran. This is the case because first, Iran is viewed as an unfriendly adversary of the United States; second, it is hardly unusual for those of Turkic background to be traveling in Iran; and third, because loosely patrolled Iranian border checkpoints in the Balochistan region bordering Pakistan are viewed as significantly more porous than those at major international airports in Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad. Once inside Iran, Sunni jihadist recruits attempting to reach Pakistan and Afghanistan generally head for a major city in eastern Iran known as Mashhad. This process appears to be described in detail in a translated e-mail document provided to me by the U.S. Attorney’s Office in the present case. The e-mail, sent from Vurora@gmail.com to ikudaku@hotmail.com on April 9, 2011, explains: “Traveling starts from the country of Iran... You can go to Turkey’s Istanbul Consulate and get a visa from there... You will purchase a Tahrان ticket. Tahrان is Iran’s capital city. After you arrive to Tahrان, you can get to city of Mashad by plane or bus... We have a man in

²² http://sehadetvakti.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1587. September 11, 2007.

²³ Boucher, Richard. “U.S. Department of State Designates the Islamic Jihad Group Under Executive Order 13224.” U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs. Washington, DC. May 26, 2005.

²⁴ Jundullah Studios. “Frohe Bohtshaft aus Pakistan.” January 16, 2011.
<http://www.shamikh1.net/vb/showthread.php?t=408>.

Mashad.”²⁵ The email explains that, from the city of Mashhad, it will cost recruits at least an additional \$500 to reach “where we are... tell Azam that Ebu Yasir is lives in Orakzay. Azam will take care all the procedures until Wazaristan. Tell that you will be going to Wazaristan, Miramshah. Miramshah is a place where Mujahedeen stay.”²⁶ The town of Miramshah is the administrative headquarters of Pakistan’s restive North Waziristan province. It is a virtual no-go zone for outsiders, and has been largely occupied by the Pakistani Taliban and various allied groups of foreign fighters throughout the last decade. Since 2005, more than 36 U.S. drone missile strikes targeting Al-Qaida and affiliated militants have landed in or near Miramshah.

In March 2010, one such foreign jihadi faction emerged in Waziristan, nominally led by extremists from the former Soviet republic of Azerbaijan: the “Taifatul Mansura” Organization. On its new official website, the group explained that it had been “established under the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan” and would release statements in a variety of languages, including German.²⁷ According to a note from Taifatul Mansura’s official media wing, “Al-Kahf Media”, “those loyal to Taifatul Mansura, who are also affiliated with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan... are fighting in Afghanistan against the occupying forces for the victory and glory of Islam.”²⁸ The group was reportedly led by a commander identified as “Selahaddin Azeri.”²⁹ Three months later, “Taifatul Mansura” published an interview with its media spokesman, “Abu Yaser et-Turki.” Among other things, Abu Yasir was asked if speaking only Turkish would be “an obstacle to joining the jihad.” He replied, “I do not know any language other than Turkish, and maybe a little bit of Arabic, rough Arabic, and the Arabs here talk with me and make jokes. There are groups from each country here, and with each country, there are units with mixed people. For instance, my group includes people from Azerbaijan, Turkey, Russia, Dagestan, etc.... This did not prevent anyone from joining the jihad.”³⁰ In March 2010, Taifatul Mansura supporters were advised “we will release further information and news about our community on Alcihad.com.” According to a joint statement issued on behalf of Taifatul Mansura and “the commander of the Taliban”, “it was decided that our website from now on is an official website of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.”³¹

Though Abu Yasir et-Turki functioned as a key media representative on behalf of Taifatul Mansura, he also operated his own “Cihad Medya Enformasyon Merkezi” (“Jihad Media Information Center”), which he identified as the official media wing of the “Cemaat ul-Islam Camp” and affiliated with the “Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan” (the Taliban). The website was accessible via the domain Cihadmedya.net, and I saved multiple mirrored copies of the site during mid-2010. At various times, the site also advertised its allegiance to the “Ceyshut Tevhid Group” (a.k.a. “Army of Monotheism Group”), a jihadi unit in AFPAK formerly headed by deceased commander Salaheddin

²⁵ 20150604155131986.pdf

²⁶ 20150604155131986.pdf

²⁷ http://www.alcihad.com/haber/Sitemiz_Acildi-514. March 12, 2010.

²⁸ http://www.alcihad.com/haber/Alkahf_Medya_Sunar_CIHADA_YARDIM-522. March 12, 2010.

²⁹ http://www.alcihad.com/haber/Taifatul_Manusra-583. March 29, 2010.

³⁰ http://www.alcihad.com/haber/Cihada_Katilmak_Isteyenin_%E2%80%99Gitt_Gelleri-806. June 18, 2010.

³¹ http://www.alcihad.com/haber/Alcihad.coma_Islam_Emirligi_Resmi_sitesi_Statusu_Verildi-682. May 12, 2010.

Azeri. The website published exclusive articles, video, and information about the activities of Turkic mujahideen fighting in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and beyond. It also featured a range of statements published by Ebu Yasir et-Turki, as well as solicitations for donations to jihadi causes.

Underscoring the multinational demographics of Taifatul Mansura, on May 3, 2010, the official Taifatul Mansura “representative for Germany”, “Abu Esila El Almani”, issued a statement regarding recent clashes with the Pakistani army near Miranshah, North Waziristan:

“Today morning we receive the news that... our brother Salahuddin Turki and our German brother Abdulgaffar Almani have been martyred. Brothers had joined the jihad from Germany. During the same operations our Uzbek brothers Hezbollah and Abu Abdullah fell martyr also. On the evening of April 30 in Miranshah-Miral, treacherous Pakistani army soldiers attacked our brothers. In this attack, our brother Salahuddin Turki was wounded. While lying injured, when the traitor soldiers approached him, he detonated a hand grenade. As a result of explosion, four traitor soldiers died and subsequently our brother was martyred. Emirate intelligence units in the region are reporting that eight of our brothers from Taifatul Mansura have been martyred in the last 10 days as the operation took place... We would be wise to specify that the number of Europeans participating in the jihad, especially from Germany, is huge. Some of our fellow comrades from Europe have achieved martyrdom.”³²

Taifatul Mansura also repeatedly emphasized its links and partnership with the “Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan” (i.e. the Afghan Taliban). In May 2010, the group declared that its “representatives have reached an agreement with the Taliban media chief for alcihad.com to release original reports of operations by the Taliban... The site has now gained the status of an official site of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan... Alcihad.com is directly connected to the Taliban spokesman.”³³ Days later, Taifatul Mansura issued a second communique announcing that it had deployed “its third group to Afghanistan to fight against kuffar occupators according ‘Fath 2010’ plan [from the] Afghanistan Islamic Emirate”, led by “Abu Nuh” and “Zubeyir Azeri.”³⁴ This was followed up by yet another note from “Al-Kahf Media”, advising that “according to intelligence information received from those who participated in the operation by Taliban mujahideen in Paktika province, 20 U.S. soldiers were killed in an operation and more than 3 vehicles were destroyed.”³⁵

Taifatul Mansura also used its Internet website to broadcast threats to attack the U.S. homeland. In June 2010, the group announced it had been contacted “through e-mail” by an unidentified “Taliban commander” who “threatened that the USA and Europe will receive an answer to the murders they committed in Afghanistan and Waziristan as soon as possible”:

³² http://www.alcihad.com/haber/Taifatul_Mansura_Germany_-660. May 3, 2010.

³³ http://www.alcihad.com/haber/Alcihad.coma_Islam_Emirligi_Resmi_sitesi_Statusu_Verildi-682. May 12, 2010.

³⁴

http://www.alcihad.com/haber/The_statement_of_military_group_%E2%80%9CTaifatul_Mansurah%E2%80%9D-688. May 15, 2010.

³⁵ http://www.alcihad.com/haber/Amerikan_Ordusuna_buyuk_Darbe-693. May 16, 2010.

“The Islamic Emirate has the strength to launch operations all over the world. The sleeper cells in USA and Europe will launch these operations shortly and take revenge for the murders in Afghanistan with a glorious victory just like 9/11. We warned Europe which has become a puppet of USA, but nevertheless, they sent their soldiers to a country, Afghanistan, which they don’t even have any connection to, and they joined in the massacres. Such as in the attacks in Kunduz where many civil people died, these murderers were promoted as heroes instead of being judged. Europe will pay for this. Units under our Emirate are waiting our commands to attack Europe and the USA. Europe has lost their last chance. They are responsible for the future consequences.”³⁶

In its public communications, the Taifatul Mansura Organization also openly acknowledged that its illicit activities were leading its personnel to be targeted by the U.S. government. In June 2010, TM media spokesman Abu Yasir et-Turki issued a communique carrying news that “Commander Ibrahim who is the leader of the ‘Yunus Group’ fighting with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and an Al-Qaida leader Sheikh Ihsanullah have died as martyrs.”³⁷ According to Abu Yasir, “late last night, a spy drone attacked a target in Waziristan. Commander Ibrahim, who was staying inside a house, together with one Turkish mujahid and an Al-Qaida military commander Shaykh Ihsanullah, were killed. For security reasons, we are not able to publish the location and details.”³⁸

Paradoxically, the leadership of Taifatul Mansura began to experience internal disputes shortly after acquiring a new military commander who—by all rights—should have given the group significant added legitimacy: “Abu Zurr al-Shishani” (a.k.a. Serdal Erbasi), a Chechen mujahideen leader of some repute who left the Caucasus to fight in Waziristan. Initially, the media wing of Taifatul Mansura did everything possible to publicize the presence of Abu Zurr, featuring him in multiple propaganda videos seated alongside other Taifatul Mansura leaders, with large Taifatul Mansura banners in the background.³⁹ Months later, this relationship had broken down to the point that Abu Zurr had formally separated from Taifatul Mansura and “he founded his own separate faction.” According to allied jihadists in the tribal areas, “Abu Zurr joined Taifatul Mansura but then had conflicts with the group and dropped out to form his own faction due to the loose operational structure involving small units targeting the occupiers.”⁴⁰ Soon thereafter, Abu Zurr was convicted by a Shariah court in Waziristan-Orakzai of killing two fellow foreign fighters, Shamil Dagistani and Ismail Azeri, in a fight over money and was summarily executed by his own former comrades.⁴¹

Beset by repeated “leadership problems” and apparent infighting, Taifatul Mansura was greatly weakened and, by mid-2010, began falling apart. On July 14, 2010, Abu Yasir et-Turki announced his sudden resignation as official media representative on behalf of Taifatul Mansura:

³⁶ http://www.alciyah.com/haber/Avrupa_ve_Amerika_Yeni_11_Eylulleri_Beklesin-788. June 11, 2010.

³⁷ http://www.alciyah.com/haber/Flas_Haber-789. June 11, 2010.

³⁸ http://www.alciyah.com/haber/Flas_Haber-789. June 11, 2010.

³⁹ http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=2184. July 24, 2009.

⁴⁰ http://www.jihadmedia.net/haber/Turkiyeli_Komutan_Ebu_Zer_Hakkinda-1191. June 6, 2011.

⁴¹ [http://www.jihadmedia.net/haber/Ebu_Zer_\(Serdal_Erbasi\)_Taliban_Tarafindan_Idam_Edildi-1203](http://www.jihadmedia.net/haber/Ebu_Zer_(Serdal_Erbasi)_Taliban_Tarafindan_Idam_Edildi-1203). June 21, 2011.

"I want to announce that I am resigning from my position without any pressure, but with my own consent. People can make mistakes and if I did any I first ask Allah's and then your forgiveness. For God's sake do not leave your brothers alone here and send them your support. I will keep talking with my brothers who are in contact with me. Abu Esila al-Almani is responsible for the media issues in Taifatul Mansura community. You can contact with him and work with him. I will continue my service in other fields."⁴²

On May 6, 2010, prompted by solicitations posted on Cihadmedya.net, our Turkish-speaking analysts at Flashpoint sent an e-mail to alkahfmedya@yahoo.com (and carbon copied to davet_kital@yahoo.com.tr) from an anonymous Gmail account purporting to ask for assistance in donating funds to support violent jihad.⁴³ Less than 24 hours later, we received an e-mail response from "Ebu Esila El Almani" (davet_kital@yahoo.com.tr) praising the "great benefits" of contributing to jihad by wealth. He added, "There is no problem in the amount... let us know when you wish to provide us" with funds and Western Union money transfer information would be provided. The e-mail was sent from IP address 217.131.191.54, which traces back to Turkcell's Superonline Internet broadband service based in Istanbul, Turkey. Turkcell is the leading mobile phone operator in the country of Turkey, and this IP address suggests that "Ebu Esila" was most likely inside Turkey when he sent this e-mail message.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York has provided me with a translated copy of a Facebook page with content reposted from the website www.jihadmedia.net. The post content is dated September 2, 2010 and purports to be a "statement regarding Ebu Yasir (Zekeriya Ciftci)."⁴⁴ The statement appears to reference the aforementioned quarreling and disputes that emerged at the senior levels of the group over accusations of embezzlement and corruption in the context of jihadi fundraising activities. The USAO has also provided me with a copy of a screenshot of the website Cihadmedya.net dated January 7, 2011.⁴⁵ The website is headlined by an article purportedly written by former TM spokesman Zekeriya Ciftci (a.k.a. "Abu Yasir") titled, "Abu Yasir al-Turki's Life in Short: A Self-Written Response to the Overwhelming Provocations Against Abu Yasir et-Turki." During the article, Ciftci describes his involvement in various jihadi causes in detail, and particularly his efforts to aid mujahideen fighting in Afghanistan. Ciftci acknowledges in the article that in 2009, he "began working for the Islamic Jihad Union." This appears to be corroborated by IJU propaganda. In April 2008, an individual identified as "Abu Yasir et-Turki" was featured in an interview posted on the IJU's official website. In the interview, "Abu Yasir" proclaimed, "we are Allah's warriors and we will fight until the only religion in the world is Islam or until we become martyrs... Our brothers before us, Ibn-ul-Khattab, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Shaykh Usama [Bin Laden], and many others whose names are unknown, these brave fighters are examples for us."⁴⁶ It appears that the subject of this IJU interview was, in fact, Zekeriya Ciftci. Ciftci also relates the details of his relationship with senior TM commander Salaheddin Azeri and the organization TM: "I

⁴² <http://www.alciyah.com/haber/Duyuru-847>. July 14, 2010.

⁴³ http://www.alciyah.com/haber/Taifatul_Manusra-583. March 29, 2010.

⁴⁴ 20150604155031693.pdf

⁴⁵ 20150604155045168.pdf, 20150604155109400.pdf.

⁴⁶ http://sehadetvakti.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1907. April 14, 2008.

became the Media Emir, to take care of the media work of their congregation, since I was knowledgeable in media tasks.”⁴⁷

In the article, Ciftci also described how he had first encountered Seyfullah Ergun (a.k.a. “Ebu Esila al-Almani”): “I told Selahaddin about this Ebu Esila, and about his abilities too. Emir [Selahaddin] said, ‘if you trust him, there is no problem.’ Since Esila said that he had links to Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, and France, I made him the European representative.”⁴⁸ Previously, on May 2, 2010, Ciftci issued a public statement under the banner of Taifatul Mansura similarly confirming that “Ebu Esila el Almani is our contact for Holland, Germany, France, and Belgium.”⁴⁹ Ciftci later described how he had assigned Ebu Esila to follow up on donor inquiries e-mailed from users on the Internet: “I thought it be best if Esila followed up [by himself]. I was checking the emails every once in a while, but not a penny came through the ones I was working on.”⁵⁰ This is indeed exactly what took place when we contacted Taifatul Mansura in May 2010 as would-be donors. The total amounts of donations collected—as reported by Ebu Yasir—also correspond to my understanding of how the IJU and its allies were raising money at the time. I am aware that it was quite common for these groups to solicit donations from Internet users in the tens, or hundreds of dollars, to be delivered to a recipient in Turkey via bank wire transfer or Western Union. An appeal for donations posted by “Ebu Yasir et-Turki” in May 2010 similarly suggested contributions of \$200 from each donor.⁵¹

⁴⁷ 20150604155109400.pdf

⁴⁸ 20150604155109400.pdf

⁴⁹ http://www.alciyah.com/haber/Taifatul_Mansura_Mecmuasi-652. May 2, 2010.

⁵⁰ 20150604155109400.pdf

⁵¹ <http://www.cihadmedya.net/2010-kurban-kampanyasi>. May 10, 2010.